2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



would otherwise ensue during his absence on state business.

Every Mandal has under him several assistants known as *Karbari*. The number of these is not fixed and is at the discretion of individual headmen. Karbaris are appointed for a period of three years, and with the exception of Lamas everyone takes on the duty in turn. The roster goes on indefinitely, so that if any particular man is not called upon during his own lifetime the turn devolves upon his son. There is no pay nor any other material advantage in the office of Karbari, but it is not unpopular, since it gives the holder a certain amount of authority.

When a man has retired from the office of Karbari he is eligible for the appointment of *Youmi*. At present time there are four Youmis in Lingtem. Whenever any matter crops up which can only be decided by reference to customary law the Mandal calls in the Youmis to aid him in giving a decision. They are usually very old men, and because of this they can decide such matters as whether there is any reason why a particular couple should not be married: or if one man runs off with the wife of another what compensation he should be required to pay, and so on. The word *Youmi* does not appear in the dictionary and I do not know what it means. I believe, however, that the office may be a survival of tribal administration. It is not known in other parts of Sikkim.

There is no *per capita* tax in Sikkim but every house pays five rupees a year. In addition to this there is a tax of one rupee for each sixteen pounds of dry rice sown, and the same for maize. Rice grown wet, in terraced fields (a recent innovation), is taxed at eight annas for eight pounds of seed, but barley, buckwheat, and wheat are free. The economics of Lingtem, and indeed of most parts of Sikkim, are now based upon the cardamom, the sale of which is a state monopoly. The market price of cardamoms fluctuates from year to year, and for this reason the tax is adjusted to a sliding scale. When the rate is ten rupees a maund (approximately eighty pounds) the cultivator pays a tax of fourteen annas a maund; one and a half rupees when the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



651 market rate is twenty, and two and a half when it rises to
655 forty rupees. The right to buy cardamoms throughout the state has been sold to certain specified contractors, who are responsible for collecting the above tax and handing it over as a lump sum to the Durbar office. The weighing of the crops is done in the presence of representatives of the state; but even so the system results in considerable hardship to the peasant. As is usually the case the man who does the work sees little of the profit. This question, however, will be discussed when we come to consider the question of debt.

651 When cattle are grazed in the forest their owners pay a tax
231 of two annas a month for each animal. Most of the oxen not required for ploughing remain up in the forest from February until about the middle of June. They are left entirely unattended and never stray. I have travelled a great deal in various parts of the Himalaya but in no other place have I seen cattle roaming about completely unattended. It was a most extraordinary sight to see them going out to graze in the mornings completely alone, returning again in the evening, and always in the same order. It is a common sight all over India to see small children out with the cattle or driving a flock of goats along the road. It is in many ways a good thing
857 and gives the child a sense of responsibility. But in Jongu one never sees it, and the children hang about in the fields all day or play around the house. The only time that cattle are watched is when it is known that a predatory animal is about. At such times a small boy will usually stay by them.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



521 522 831 was greeted with much giggling laughter, which seems to be reserved exclusively for this type of joke.

356 I was told that there was no one in charge of the work, and certainly did not hear anyone giving any sort of order. In spite of this, however, there was no fuss or bother; everyone seemed to know exactly what to do.

314 356 655 The material for roofing this house had been gradually collected during the past three months. We noticed one old man sitting apart, about a hundred yards away up the hill. He was preparing the canes for making the ties. We wondered why he was all alone. "So as not to attract the notice of any government official who might pass this way," he said. This appeared a most unlikely contingency, unless he thought we were spies; but since cane is a forest product, and therefore the property of the State, it should not rightfully be used without permission. This prohibition also applies of course to firewood; but in that case appears to be disregarded.

313 342 313 The thatch, by means of two overlaps, is of three thicknesses. It is not fixed to the rafters but is roughly kept in place with a long stick tied right across it. It is made from a special kind of bamboo only found high up in the forest. This is cut into four-feet lengths, split, soaked in water, and bent double while still green. It is placed on the roof with the inner surface outside, so that the rain is carried off the roof by what is, to all intents and purposes, a series of open bamboo drains.

356 As soon as the rafters and cross-pieces had been prepared the women joined in the work, the heavy bundles of thatch being first carried up to the attic by men. Pemba's father took no part and spent most of his time repairing a hedge round the house, in which he was assisted by his youngest son. The whole roof had been stripped off before we arrived; but one small corner had been left, as protection in case the new roof was not completed by nightfall.

778 I noticed that a bullock's horn had been fastened over the door. This is known as *Gusung*, and is meant to frighten devils. There is no ceremony in connection with its use; but

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



whether they should get warm woollen clothes, or have to put up with shoddy cotton. I should like to think that at least the Tibetan farmer made something out of the transaction; but he, too, is in the hands of the Indian money-lenders in Kalimpong, caught in the intricacies of a vicious circle. The remedy is, of course, obvious; but in present circumstances almost impossible of attainment.

Cardamoms are a State monopoly, and the right to trade in them has been sold to the official State Bankers, an outside concern which, in its turn, also controls all the money-lenders in the State. This is a convenient arrangement for the authorities and saves the provision of numerous extra officials; but even if the State itself assumed control of the business there would be no means of ensuring that the peasants were not cheated, petty (and usually underpaid) officials being much the same all over the East. Under the present system of taxation the people must obviously grow cardamoms, as in no other way can they raise the necessary cash with which to pay their taxes: and from a theoretical point of view their cultivation is a source of extra profit. Indeed, this actually is the case in many parts of Sikkim, where the people are more sophisticated, and better able to safeguard their own interests. There is no doubt that when the Maharaja's predecessors introduced this plant into Sikkim they did so with the motive of improving the people's economic condition; but in those days no one could be expected to foresee the disastrous effects of introducing uncontrolled monetary trading into an illiterate community, organised on socialist lines, which previously had no need of actual cash. As it is, cardamoms are a perfect curse in Jongu.